



Eric Cline, *The Trojan War: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2013.

In Eric Cline's latest learned tome he tackles the Trojan's and their war. It's worth noting right off that a glance at the index shows that Cline does not mention Zwingli so much as once; but why would he? This delightful volume specifically focuses its attention on one matter and one alone- a telling of the Trojan tale stripped bare of unnecessary 'rabbit chasings'.

In 130 small pages Cline discusses in three parts, 1- The Trojan War; 2- Investigating the Literary Evidence; and 3- Investigating the Archaeological Evidence. More precisely, chapters include examinations of the Trojan tale in ancient Greek literature, the historical context of the war, the historicity of Homer and his tale (which is, to my mind, the heart of the matter), Hittite texts bearing on the story, early excavations of Troy, and later excavations. The volume also includes 10 illustrations (charts, maps and that sort of thing), a glossary of places and people (and deities), and finally, a bibliography for each chapter and an index.

I'll leave to you, the reader of the volume (which, by the way, you should be at some point) to decide if the evidence Cline assembles is enough to demonstrate the historical veracity of the Trojan tale. For Cline it is, with some hesitation. And that, I think, is the single greatest strength of both this book and Cline's scholarship in general: he refuses to go beyond the evidence and offer a definitive yea or nay.

Notice, for just one instance of many, the closing phrases of the book:

...the story [of the Trojan War, of course] still holds broad appeal even today, more than three thousand years after the original events, or some variation thereof, took place (p. 110).

Cline is a measured thinker who measures his words as he measures his evidence and, in authentically scholarly fashion, only and strictly says what his evidence leads him to say.

Readers of this, and other of his works, will be most impressed with that attribute- especially given the absurd and exaggerated claims of TV specials on archaeology, the Bible, history, and other such things.

This little book is worth its weight in gold. Trojan gold.

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